



# HISTORY MATTERS



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello Coronado,

I hope everyone had a wonderful 4th of July week. What an incredible way to celebrate our Nation's past as well as give homage to our wonderful city. I find it hard to believe that any city anywhere packed in as much entertainment into a 24 hour period as our enchanted island. For most of us though, the important thing about the 4th of July in Coronado are the memories it brings. From those who have been here for every parade, to the young ones experiencing it for the first time, every 4th of July captures something for each of us to look back on and enjoy. Coronado may not be unique in its patriotism, but does encapsulate everything that the Holiday stands for.

Looking through the archives here at the Coronado Historical Assoc., it is easy to recognize the importance the 4th plays on our City. From the early days when most the floats and parade participants were home grown volunteer clubs and businesses, to the always well represented military entries, to now, when the entire country seems to partake. Certain pictures in our collection always have a way of connecting us to our past; even for those of different generations. Here is a picture of the Newcomers Club float.

There isn't a lot of history on the Newcomers Club, but one can only imagine it was a club that welcomed new residents to town; whether Military or transients. If you know anything about the Newcomers Club, please contact us to help update our archives so their story can be told. The real impact the photo tells is through the Mother, son and daughter, consoling each other as they look over the graves of fallen heroes from two World Wars. As a Coronado kid who never had to fight for his country, I have so much respect for the message of this float; it's respect for our fallen heroes, it's ties to our deep military history and its community openness embracing any and all to our emerald city, as we do each and every 4th of July.



## UPCOMING EVENTS WITH CHA

**July 19, 5:30 pm** | Annual Meeting

Please join us on Thursday July 19, 2018 at 5:30 pm in the Coronado Historical Association Lecture hall for our Annual Meeting.

We will be presenting the Annual Report, annual financials, and the Board of Director elections. The Annual Meeting is a great opportunity for our members to see what has happened behind the scenes of CHA during this past year. We look forward to sharing the details of our accomplishments.

**July 21, 10:30 am** | Hands On History: Speak like a Sailor

Learn about sailboat terminology, navigation, and craft your own seaworthy vessel.

**July 27, 5:30 pm** | Movies at the Museum

Come for the second installment of "Night at the Museum!" Parents are encouraged to drop off their kids and have a date night.

**July 28, 7:00 pm** | Member Block Party

It's a block party! Join us for beer, wine, music and an outdoor lecture from local historians Gerry MacCartee and Nancy Cobb at the first ever CHA summertime block party. 21 and over

**Save The Date:  
Member Block Party  
July 28**

Those and many other Coronado images can be found in the Research Library at the Coronado Historical Association, where we have over 25K historic photos. But this article is about 4th of July memories, so I would like to share some of my own. Being born in 1974, I had the pleasure of catching the parade before it became the social media monster it is today. My family, like many others, would welcome our friends and loved ones to a front yard party, that is, after my Mom and I ran the morning half marathon (truth be told I only caught the tail end each year). Then we would walk over to Orange Ave. to sit and watch the festivities. One year my mother, as then president of the Coronado Historical Association, entered a float depicting a tent from Tent City. Unfortunately, the tent did not have the proper ventilation to relieve my uncle from passing out, but luckily the slow moving parade allowed for the VW bus to be steered back into the right direction and my uncle to be properly oxygenated. Of all the floats and parade participants over the years though, the one I always look back on fondly are those rough and rowdy bandits who never once broke a smile as they chewed their tobacco, scowled and spat towards our feet as they begrudgingly strolled on by. Of course, no kid of my generation would ever forget the military exercises the Navy put on in Glorietta Bay or the year the Leapfrogger landed in the municipal pool. As I grew older, the parade lost its luster, but the infamous water balloon wars in front of the Yacht Club were legendary. The activities changed and the parties took the place of the parades, but the memories of the 4th always stayed. I'm sure everyone who has partaken in the beauty of this Holiday could write a similar story. The history, the tradition and the fun are what make it so special. As my young children start down the path of making memories of their own, I say thank you Coronado for giving all of us a reason to be proud, passionate and patriotic about the 4th day in July.

Robin MacCartee

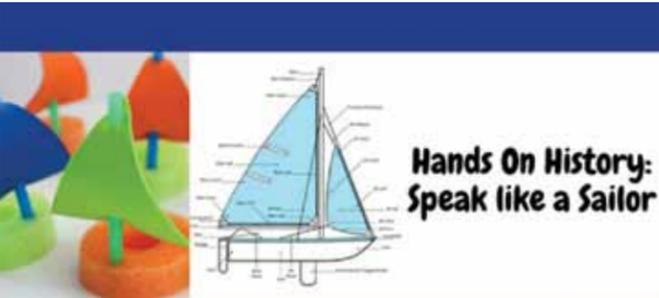


### JUNIOR HISTORIAN EVENTS



## MOVIE AT THE MUSEUM

Friday, July 27th  
6PM-8PM | \$5



**Hands On History:  
Speak like a Sailor**

Saturday  
July 21st  
10:30am-12pm

**\$5 Learning  
Workshop**



## MOVIE AT THE MUSEUM

Friday, August 17th  
6PM-8PM | \$5



**\$5 Learning  
Workshop**

**Hands On History:  
Sandcastles at Home**

Saturday  
August 18th  
10:30am-12pm

**\$5 Learning  
Workshop**

### HISTORY MYSTERY

A monthly photo of Coronado's past for residents to test their local history knowledge. See Page 3 for the answer



## The Way We Were Member Block Party

July 28th, 2018  
7pm-9pm

### JOIN THE CORONADO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION FOR ITS FIRST ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE BLOCK PARTY

On Saturday July 28th from 7-9 pm, the Coronado Historical Association is holding a block party behind our iconic building at 1013 Park Place. Any community member is invited to come for free, but you need to be a member of CHA to gain entry. This is an incredible opportunity to join our membership, learn more about what we do and give back to your community.

The evening affair will begin with a social hour where you can meet CHA staff, Board Members and other community leaders. Music will be performed by incoming Coronado High School Senior, Ryan Wood, who was a finalist in this year's Coronado Rotary Music competition. Wine & Beer will be sold with complimentary hors-d'oeuvres being provided by CHA. Tables and chairs, as well as bar tops will be accessible for all.

At 8:30 pm the presentation of "The Way We Were" by Nancy Cobb and Gerry MacCartee will begin.



This classic slideshow gives the audience insight into Coronado before the bridge was built. It will be a blast into the 50's and 60's that should bring back great memories for some and provide some new retrospective for others.

The evening is a big opportunity for CHA to grow its membership and give the community some insight towards the many efforts we make to preserve our History. For the evening to be a success, we need you, the community of Coronado to join us. Please come and enjoy the evening and give back by becoming a member.

To register visit our website at:

[WWW.CORONADO-HISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.CORONADO-HISTORY.ORG) or call the offices at (619) 435-7242

## 115 YEARS AGO

On June 30, 1903 the Coronado Tent City Daily Program read:

### THE NEW FERRY BOAT

It is announced that the new ferry boat Ramona will arrive in the bay on the night of July 2, ready for the rush on July 4. At the docks where she is building there are employed 150 men putting on the finishing touches and Captain Johnson will leave with her on the last day of June.

Ramona was built in 1903 by Risdon Iron Works on Oakland, CA. She replaced the Benicia and was steam powered with side paddle wheels and a wooden hull. The most successful of the early ferries, the Ramona became a familiar sight to travelers. With the retirement of the worn out Benicia, the Ramona was purchased and began making the picturesque run. One-hundred eighteen feet long, her paddle wheels were powered by a seven-hundred horsepower steam engine. She was the first ferry to have incandescent lights instead of the traditional oil lamps. She also had a thirteen and one half foot headway which made it possible to accommodate the hay wagons. Thoughtfully, the passenger cabins were enclosed to protect the public from the sight and more importantly, the smell of the horses. The Ramona was named after the popular book by Helen Hunt Jackson. Two years after she was launched, this ferry played a part in the worst disaster San Diego and Coronado had ever experienced.

It was hot that July 21st morning in 1905. It was even hotter in the forward fire room on the gunboat U.S.S. Bennington, lying at anchor in San Diego Bay. Firemen poured coal into the boilers as they waited for her Captain to come aboard ready to weigh anchor and head to sea. The 230 foot Bennington had been in service since 1891, she had seen action in the Spanish American War and now patrolled the Pacific coast of North and South America.

Suddenly, at 10:38 a.m., two dull explosions ripped the morning calm, and a volcano of steam erupted from the deck. The ship shuddered and was soon enveloped in a cloud of steam. Men tore at their uniforms and dove overboard in an attempt to escape the scalding spray. Many were trapped in compartments below deck. Nor was steam the only danger, water poured into a hole on the starboard side. The ferryboat Ramona, as well as many other small craft, raced to the stricken ship and began to pull men out of the water. By 11:00 dead bodies littered the vessel, but help was arriving from shore. The injured were taken to city hospitals and San Diegans began responding with an outpouring of pillows, blankets and food. The Spreckels' tug boat, 'Santa Fe', managed to push the Bennington onto a mud bank to save her from sinking. Sixty-five men had died in the disaster, many others were injured. Two days later, forty-seven of these men were buried side by side in a long trench at Fort Rosecrans. Later, some of these bodies would be disinterred and returned to their families in the east after the government bowed to public pressure to pay the transportation costs. A navy court of inquiry found the cause of the explosion to be a boiler whose steam pressure gauge did not register due to its erroneous securing by a sailor. Eventually, as the fire continued to be built in it, the boiler simply burst.

The Bennington was the worst peacetime disaster that the U.S. Navy had suffered up to that time. There were many heroes who risked their lives to save shipmates, among them a young Coronadan named Willie Cronan. Eleven men would be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. There has always been a controversy over the whereabouts of the Commanding Officer at the time of the explosion. Although he stated he had been settling last minute bills and was headed back to the ship, a reporter for the San Diego Sun newspaper claimed he was the officer dash from a waterfront bar upon hearing the explosion. Both the Commanding Officer and the Chief Engineer stood trial for neglect of duty, but were acquitted when the court martial implied the Navy erred by assigning a young officer to such complex duty. The Bennington never saw service in the U.S. Navy again. Private interest purchased the hold in 1910 and the ex-gunboat was used as a barge until the 1920's. However, neither the Navy nor the people of San Diego forgot the Bennington and her men. In 1908 they raised a sixty foot granite obelisk as a memorial that stands today in Fort Rosecrans Cemetery.

The Coronado ferry, the Ramona, that had helped rescue the scalded and struggling sailors from the bay, continued to give twenty-eight years of faithful service, retiring in 1931. She was then converted into a nightclub and anchored off the Red Sails Inn. One night she sank in a storm but, still with spunk, was raised to sail the bay once again, without her superstructure, as a scow. After serving the route for over 25 years the vessel was replaced by newer vessels being built for the route.

She operated until 1931 and was scrapped in 1932.



Photograph of the ferryboat Ramona.



U. S. Gunboat Bennington after Explosion, San Diego Bay, July 21, 1905. This postcard from the Association's collection shows the U.S. Gunboat Bennington after Explosion, San Diego Bay, July 21, 1905.



John D. Spreckels yacht, the Venetia, towing the ferryboat Ramona for maintenance, 1921.

## COOL FOR THE SUMMER

Throughout Coronado's early days to today, Coronadans and visitors enjoyed the beach. Some people might even assume that early vacationers at the Hotel Del or Tent City spent much of their time at the beach, but in reality, guests had many options.

They danced and saw performances at the Pavilion. Some strolled along a boardwalk and many enjoyed The Plunge

Near Tent City, the Plunge facility was a bathhouse and water sports entertainment facility. Saltwater pools helped vacationers adjust to the salt of the ocean waters and was considered to be medically therapeutic.

The pool and swimsuit-clad vacationers are documented by the many historic photographs and postcards of the early 1900s from the Association's collection.



The Merry-Go-Round built in 1910 was owned by C.E. Wilken and acquired from Luna Park. The Merry-go-round and pool are featured in this Tent City photo circa 1915. The Merry-Go-Round Moved to Balboa Park from 1915-1916 for the Pan American Exposition.



This photograph shows a full view of the Tent City Wading Pool with Tent City's famous tents in the distance.



The swimming pool of the indoor plunge was a popular attraction for visitors and locals. If you look closely, you can see two large toy horses in the water and a two-story water slide.

It was in operation. It was nearly fifty years in the few short years that and First Street. It opened in 1915, cranking nado. The studio was located at Orange Avenue sets at the Lubin Studios located here in Coro- This medieval-looking castle was part of the

## HISTORY MYSTERY ANSWER